

# South Carolina Department of Agriculture

Hugh Weathers, Commissioner



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – July 3, 2008**

## **Keep Food Safe After Power Outages**

WASHINGTON, DC - The U.S. Department of Agriculture is providing recommendations for the public to help minimize the potential for foodborne illnesses after a weather emergency.

Steps to follow after the weather emergency:

- Never taste a food to determine its safety!
- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.
- The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about four hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the door remains closed.)
- Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40° F or below.
- Obtain block or dry ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot full freezer for two days.
- If the power has been out for several days then check the temperature of the freezer with an appliance or food thermometer. If the food still contains ice crystals or is at 40° F or below then the food is safe.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer then check each package of food to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals then the food is safe.
- Discard refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items after four hours without power.
- Drink only bottled water if flooding has occurred.
- Discard all food that came in contact with flood waters, including canned goods. Discard wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers.
- Thoroughly wash all metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils that came in contact with flood water with hot soapy water and then sanitize by boiling them in clean water or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.

## **When in Doubt, Throw it Out!**

Consumers with food safety questions can phone the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854); TTY, 1-800-256-7072. The hotline is available in English and Spanish and can be reached from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday. Recorded food safety messages are available 24 hours a day.

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